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ABSTRACT

Louisiana's coastal wetlands are a crucial line of defense against inbound storms from the Gulf of Mexico. However, Hurricane Katrina demonstrated that this line of defense is failing. This study sought to determine how a focusing event like Hurricane Katrina affected the print newspaper media in its coverage of coastal wetland issues and to determine if this wetland coverage had any influence on the Louisiana budgetary commitments for coastal restoration initiatives. A content analysis was conducted of two major daily circulated south Louisiana newspapers to determine the number of articles published discussing wetland issues. The results of this content analysis were then compared to budget data acquired during a personal meeting between this researcher and Robert Harper, then Undersecretary of the Louisiana Department of Natural Resources on April 16, 2010. These data were then analyzed to determine if any covariance existed between media coverage of wetland issues and statutory dedications in the Louisiana budget for coastal restoration projects. The results provide insight into the nature of media coverage of a focusing event.